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Preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 56/113 of 19 December 2001. The report describes the state of preparation for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 at the global, regional and national levels. It provides information on salient activities and experiences of the United Nations system, Member States and non-governmental organizations. It also includes recommendations for a successful observance of the anniversary.

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I. Introduction

1. This is the fifth biennial report on preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/113 of 19 December 2001. In that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-seventh session on appropriate ways and means to observe the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 and to describe the state of preparation for the observance of the tenth anniversary at all levels.

2. The present report is based both on responses to a note verbale from the Secretary-General dated 22 February 2002 addressed to Governments and on information made available by Governments to the Secretariat. It should be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of the Family in 2004" (E/CN.5/2002/2), submitted to the fortieth session of the Commission for Social Development. That report described recent initiatives undertaken at the international level related to preparations for the observance of the anniversary in 2004. In addition, a basic approach for observing the tenth anniversary at all levels and suggestions for follow-up actions were developed.

II. Actions at the international level

A. Commission for Social Development

3. At its fortieth session (11-21 February 2002), the Commission for Social Development reviewed the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of the Family in 2004" (E/CN.5/2002/2). It recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption draft resolution E/CN.5/2002/L.3, entitled "Preparations for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family". In the terms of that draft resolution, member Governments would agree to the invitation to establish national mechanisms to prepare for, observe and follow up the tenth anniversary. In addition, the Secretary-General would be invited to launch the tenth anniversary in early December 2003. It would also be decided that the General Assembly should devote one plenary meeting to the observance of the tenth anniversary at its fifty-ninth session.

4. During the session, representatives of Governments expressed considerable interest in the observance of the tenth anniversary. All delegations followed the preparations for it closely. Various countries announced the establishment of national coordinating committees (Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Suriname, Thailand and Zambia).

B. Second World Assembly on Ageing

5. The United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing was held in Madrid from 8 to 12 April 2002, to respond to the rapid ageing of populations during the twenty-first century and to promote a "society for all ages". In its resolution 54/262 of 25 May 2000, the General Assembly decided to convene the Second World Assembly on Ageing, 20 years after the first World Assembly on Ageing was held in

Vienna, to adopt a revised International Plan of Action on Ageing, organized according to three priority directions: older persons and development, advancing health and well-being into old age and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. In addition, special emphasis was given to measures to mainstream ageing within the context of current global development agendas; appropriate forms of public and private partnerships at all levels to build a society for all ages; and measures to strengthen the solidarity between generations. One hundred and fifty-six Member States, more than 800 non-governmental organizations and numerous intergovernmental organizations participated.

6. The topic of the family was central to the deliberations of the Assembly. Care of older persons by the family and family support structures were major issues that were debated. The Second World Assembly on Ageing adopted a Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, which committed Governments to act to meet the challenge of ageing populations and provided a set of 239 concrete recommendations. Of the 131 paragraphs of the Plan of Action, 31 make specific reference to families.

C. Special session of the General Assembly on children

7. At the final meeting of its special session on children, held in New York from 4 to 10 May 2002, the General Assembly adopted the outcome document, entitled "A world fit for children" which contains a Declaration and a Plan of Action. Topics such as trafficking in children, child prostitution, child pornography, child labour, the disparity between boys and girls in access to education, and female genital mutilation were tackled. Many Governments highlighted their family-related policies that provide an environment conducive to the positive development of children.

D. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

8. The deliberations on the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the 2001 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, as well as those during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, are cited in document E/CN.5/2002/2.

E. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

9. As the lead entity for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has concentrated its efforts since 2001 on a four-pronged approach: (a) taking the programme, strategy and objectives of the tenth anniversary to the national level; (b) strengthening channels of communication between the Department and the United Nations system, the non-governmental sector and intergovernmental organizations; (c) enhancing research capacity for family policy development; and (d) servicing relevant intergovernmental bodies.

10. With regard to actions at the national level, the Department has promoted the establishment of national coordination mechanisms or other bodies and assisted

Member States, at their request, in establishing national priorities concerning families, as well as in initiating specific action programmes for the tenth anniversary. In this connection, the Family Unit web site (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/index.html), the bimonthly web-based circular *Family Matters*, and the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities are vital instruments for garnering needed support and for disseminating information to the national and grass-roots levels.

11. To strengthen channels of communications, the Department has continued to promote collaborative efforts within the United Nations system, as well as with Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to enhance their active participation. Various Governments have received relevant information and have been provided with policy guidance about the approaches and strategies for the tenth anniversary. Cooperative efforts have been initiated with the Caribbean Community Secretariat, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the International Organization for Migration, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the League of Arab States. For example, the Organization of African Unity requested its Member States to establish national mechanisms for the anniversary and envisages a regional meeting in 2003, which would elaborate an African "charter on the family". Furthermore, in 2001 the Council of Europe set up a new body called the Forum for Children and Families, which will focus on the tenth anniversary. The Directorate of Human and Social Development within the Caribbean Community Secretariat is conducting a review of family themes and is devising an integrated approach to the tenth anniversary.

12. To initiate a research capacity for family policy development as a contribution to the observance of the tenth anniversary, the Department has embarked on three specific, novel initiatives: (a) the establishment of an inter-university network on family policy development;[1] (b) the preparation of a global study on regional trends; and (c) continuing the ongoing research work of the Family Unit. With regard to the inter-university network, there is a need to increase cooperation between numerous institutions of higher learning in respect of family policy development, streamlining and delineating main substantive themes.

13. With the cooperation of the Regional Commissions,[2] five major trends have been identified that have transformed families to a considerable degree. In the last 50 years, family life worldwide has been transformed by (a) changes in family structure (smaller households, delayed marriage and childbearing, and increased rates of divorce and single-parenthood); (b) increased migration; (c) demographic ageing; (d) the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and (e) the impact of globalization on families. Such transformations have had a manifest impact on the capacity of families to perform social functions such as the socialization of children, caregiving for younger and older generations and creating social capital. These trends place a heavy burden on family members and challenge their ability to fulfil basic functions of production, reproduction and socialization. A report on these topics will be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, in 2004.

14. As part of its regular programme of work, the Department finalized two research studies on family issues, entitled "Families affected by HIV/AIDS in selected countries" and "Indicators and statistics for family well-being". These

studies encourage reflection on the types of strategies and policy options available and enhance capacity for improving the conditions of families. It is expected that they will become available shortly.

15. The servicing of relevant intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, is important, as these bodies are barometers for measuring interests and intentions, as well as the source of mandates emanating from Governments. The intergovernmental bodies have been provided with reports on the preparations for the tenth anniversary (E/CN.5/2001/4 and E/CN.5/2002/2).

16. The United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities, as an instrument to further the implementation of International Year of the Family objectives, continues to provide Governments and non-governmental organizations with critical seed-money grants to reinforce family-related concerns in development projects and programmes. Special attention is given to least developed countries and developing countries, as well as to countries with economies in transition (see E/CN.5/2002/2).

17. On 15 May 2002, the annual International Day of Families was observed. The theme for the International Day in 2002 was "Families and Ageing: Opportunities and Challenges", in the context of the Second World Assembly on Ageing. The Secretary-General, in his message, highlighted the changing demographics and many challenges facing families. He also pointed out that families are the key to socializing and educating younger generations and to providing care and support for older generations. To commemorate the Day at United Nations Headquarters, the Department invited eminent persons to a panel discussion on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its importance for families; changing family structures and ageing; and consideration of the role of families in ageing societies. The New York NGO Committee and the Department of Public Information were co-sponsors of the event.

F. United Nations system

18. The objectives and strategy of the tenth anniversary have been supported by concerned United Nations agencies and bodies, including especially the Regional Commissions. In this regard, new activities are being developed by individual organizations, including the development of networks at the regional and national levels. Concerned United Nations bodies and agencies have also coordinated their activities with Governments in order to encourage and/or strengthen national and local initiatives, policies and programmes for families. In many cases such coordination entails the provision of technical, substantive and material support to ministries responsible for families and to related institutions, the promotion of technical cooperation activities benefiting families at the national level, and the provision of advisory services to Governments at their request.

19. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) promotes an enabling environment for sustainable human development. This focus is strongly linked to family issues through policy and programming initiatives to promote poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods, environmental regeneration, good governance, gender equality and the advancement of women. The range of UNDP country activities, carried out in close cooperation with agencies of the United Nations system, are closely linked to family issues, gender equality and the

advancement of women, and include the following: measuring the role of women in societies; empowerment of women in economic and political decision-making processes; capacity development for gender analysis and for gender equality practices; legislation to combat violence against women; and poverty eradication programmes.

Regional Commissions

20. The five Regional Commissions continue to be key players in the preparations for the tenth anniversary. Since 2001, they have interacted with various national authorities and with civil society on family issues. They continue to serve three important functions with respect to the preparations for the tenth anniversary: as providers of information on salient family experiences; as facilitators for regional cooperation efforts in the family field in their respective regions; and as forums for articulating regional perspectives on family issues, including through the organization of regional-level preparations for the tenth anniversary.

21. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic Commission for Africa intend to hold informal consultations at the regional level with representatives of relevant United Nations bodies and agencies and regional and non-governmental organizations. These consultations are directed towards an exchange of information on and coordination of promotional activities for the tenth anniversary. ECLAC has created a link from its home page to the web site of the Family Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In the area of research and information exchange, ESCWA concentrates on, among other things, the empowerment of families, ECLAC on domestic violence and ECE on family formation and behaviour.

Specialized agencies

22. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is active on family issues within its broad mandate on food security, food production and rural development. In November 2001, FAO adopted the Third Plan of Action on Gender and Development, which addresses the capacity of family members, women and men alike, to achieve both sustainable livelihoods and household food security. In December 2001, FAO organized a technical meeting to focus on mitigating the negative effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on farmers, rural families and farm households.

23. The International Labour Organization (ILO) improves the lives of families through standard setting, research and studies, organization of meetings, and technical cooperation. It will launch an advocacy programme to encourage Governments to develop responsive policies and programmes to assist workers in reconciling the competing demands of professional and family life. A report will be published in 2003 on the responses to the work/family challenge in developing and transitional economies. ILO is emphasizing the Convention concerning Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981 (No. 156), during the lead-up to 2004.

24. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in the framework of the tenth anniversary, inter alia, takes stock of and reviews national

family support policies and organizes regional consultation meetings in selected regions.

25. The World Health Organization (WHO), which has a cluster on family and community health, promotes the concept that it is within the family that the best opportunities for promoting the health, development and well-being of the individual are found. The most successful family programmes comprise an integrated combination of activities related to health, nutrition, child development and education. WHO supports the notion that broader access to information and communication skills within families are key elements for childcare, care of the elderly, women's health care, household food security, adolescent health and family planning.

III. Actions at the national level

26. There is recognition by many Governments that the tenth anniversary is, in the context of development, an important global initiative to draw renewed attention to International Year of the Family objectives and to undertake concerted actions to strengthen family-centred policies and programmes within national development planning (e.g., in Barbados, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Gambia, Guatemala, Mali, Mongolia, Namibia, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Spain and the United Republic of Tanzania). Various Governments are developing family-enhancing employment policies that enable both male and female workers to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and family responsibilities.

27. Numerous Governments have established, or are in the process of establishing, a national coordination mechanism to deal with the planning and effective observance of the tenth anniversary. These mechanisms are sensitizing public opinion on family-related issues, mobilizing resources from the private and public sectors for the implementation of tenth-anniversary programmes and facilitating channels of communication through the dissemination of information between government and family-related non-governmental organizations.

28. Various Governments have initiated family legislation and codes to ensure that such legislation is non-discriminatory and respects the human rights of all family members (e.g., in Ecuador, Egypt, Japan, Jordan, Mauritius, Morocco, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and New Zealand).

29. Within the context of the tenth anniversary, numerous Governments are promoting gender equality in the family and intend to adopt laws, regulations and other measures to that effect. Several Governments have taken measures to ensure equal access of women and men to employment, education and job training and to encourage the sharing of domestic responsibilities (e.g., in Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Singapore and Slovakia). In Japan, a Gender Equality Bureau was created within the Prime Minister's Office, as well as a new Council for Gender Equality. In 2001 the Republic of Korea created a Ministry of Gender Equality, responsible for planning and coordinating policies for women, promoting gender equality and taking measures to eliminate violence against women. In Antigua and Barbuda, a country research programme is planned with respect to abused women and children.

30. As at 24 June 2002, responses to the note verbale sent by the Secretary-General to Member States on 22 February 2002 had been received from Burkina Faso, Chile, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, Italy, Jordan, Mauritius, Morocco, New Zealand, the Philippines, Romania, Slovakia, the Sudan, Thailand and Turkey.

31. From those responses, it appears that the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family is gaining support and is attracting a growing number of partners at all levels. Measures at the national level include the setting up of national coordinating mechanisms, elaboration of national programmes of action and identification by Governments of focal points for the anniversary. Major elements of national programmes for the anniversary year include awareness-raising, streamlining old policies and programmes and developing new ones, improving the socio-economic conditions of families through legislation and other means, enhancing the rights and well-being of family members and dealing with specific issues of direct relevance to families.

32. Thus, in Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity is responsible for the observance of the tenth anniversary. The Government has paid attention to issues of poverty, family rights and responsibilities and the role of education in family life.

33. Chile has created a body called the National Service for Women, which is responsible for family-related policies. During the last two years, it has coordinated an Inter-Ministerial Commission that has, among other things, designed a Policy and Plan of Action for Families.

34. In the Czech Republic, a new department for family policy was established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The Ministry focuses, inter alia, on equal opportunities for men and women, and provides assistance to job seekers re-entering the labour market. It introduced parental leave and improved conditions for childcare by both parents. Moreover, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs envisages a "report on the family" by 2004. A review of the existing labour code is also planned, and the needs of families with children with disabilities will be addressed.

35. The National Institute of the Child and the Family in Ecuador has undertaken actions in collaboration with relevant Ministries and non-governmental organizations to observe the anniversary. A Committee will be established soon for its observance.

36. In Egypt, preparations for the tenth anniversary are under way, under the direction of the Ministry of Social Affairs. A comprehensive programme of activities is envisaged with the collaboration of governmental and non-governmental organizations. The focus is to reinforce efforts to improve family well-being by strengthening local and national actions and to increase budgetary provisions for family programmes and projects. Governmental and non-governmental organizations organize meetings and seminars on diverse family issues such as social protection, the rights of children, the rights of women and poverty.

37. Finland aims to strengthen national family policies by 2004. More detailed plans or working groups for the preparation and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family have so far not yet been reported by the Government.

38. In Italy, under the direction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, initiatives include the relaunching of the National Families Observatory (a network of municipalities and family associations) and the preparation of a white paper on welfare.

39. In Jordan, tenth anniversary preparations have included the creation of the National Council for the Family by Law No. 37 of 2002. The aim of the Council is to improve family well-being, with the focus on a comprehensive review of family issues.

40. Mauritius has prepared a national policy paper on family protection and welfare for the observance of the tenth anniversary, as well as education programmes for parents of children. It has set up a preparatory committee to undertake a nationwide sensitization campaign. It launched an educational and promotional campaign on the preservation and transmission of family norms, values and culture.

41. In Morocco, a National Charter on Family Policy has been elaborated within the context of preparations for the tenth anniversary. It includes principles and provisions to improve the well-being of Moroccan families by, for example, reinforcing the linkages between family well-being and sustainable development, promoting family strength, providing for family needs and strengthening partnerships in support of families.

42. In New Zealand, the Ministry of Social Development is responsible for tenth-anniversary activities. They will include a review of initiatives and projects on work and familial responsibilities; intra-familial support systems; families in poverty and marginal circumstances; family legislation; education, fertility and family planning; and individual family members.

43. The Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Philippines is currently evaluating the Plan of Action on the Philippine Family and plans to create a national coordination mechanism.

44. In Romania, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity is the body responsible for family-policy development. It focuses, inter alia, on family legislation, access to employment and proper working conditions, the protection of paid leave for women and access to social protection. By the end of 2004, the State allowance for children will have increased.

45. The Bratislava International Centre for Family Studies, created by the Government of Slovakia on 1 December 1991, under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, is an expression of the Government's effort to pursue International Year of the Family objectives. In December 2001, the Government and the United Nations extended their memorandum of understanding for a second time, for another five years, to facilitate international cooperation in family research.

46. In the Sudan, the General Directorate for Women and Family Affairs within the Ministry of Welfare and Social Development is responsible for tenth-anniversary preparations. This has so far included a review of legislation concerning the rights of families and an assessment of strategies and mechanisms related to family affairs.

47. In Thailand, tenth-anniversary activities have been planned in collaboration with both governmental and non-governmental organizations. These include

community-based family well-being projects at the provincial and district levels. The National Commission on Family Development is responsible for family development processes and is chaired by the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. Its members comprise heads of relevant governmental organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations and experts. It sets guidelines for action plans in connection with the National Policy and Plan on Family Development, and coordinates, follows up and evaluates the implementation of the National Policy and Plan. Moreover, it established a committee on the preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

48. In Turkey, the Family Research Institute organizes education and public awareness programmes directed at family members. It organizes conferences and conducts family-centred research. In connection with the tenth anniversary, the Institute is planning to commission a research project on the structure of the Turkish family; integrate research on family issues; organize a competition on family-based research; and prepare an action plan concerning family issues.

IV. The role of non-governmental organizations

49. Non-governmental organizations are serving as a mobilizing and advocacy force and an essential link for mobilizing grass-roots support. Many international, regional and national non-governmental organizations are currently involved. In numerous countries they are playing a role in the activities of national coordination mechanisms.

50. Awareness campaigns conducted by non-governmental oranizations have been initiated to solicit the active participation of their affiliates at the regional, national and local levels. Among others, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Movement of Mothers, the Institute for Traffic Care, the Baha'i International Community, the World's Young Women's Christian Association, Family Support America, the New York NGO Committee on the Family, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, the Union of Latvian Families, the Large Families Association and the Global Action Committee for the Elimination of Violence in the Family have strengthened their relationships with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Their outreach activities for the tenth anniversary include sponsoring meetings; fostering support at all levels; identifying priority concerns and new approaches to family policies and issues; and participating actively in the deliberations of intergovernmental bodies.

51. The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, the New York NGO Committee on the Family and the Foundation for the Rights of the Family have undertaken meetings, organized forums, prepared statements and played a pivotal advocacy role within and outside the United Nations system. The United States-based National Council on Family Relations[3] plans to collaborate with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on an expert group meeting and a publication covering issues pertaining to the tenth anniversary. The Institute for Traffic Care has communicated its intention to organize an expert group meeting in the Netherlands in 2003 to observe the tenth anniversary.

52. The Fourth United Nations Consultative Meeting of Regional and International NGOs on the Family[4] was held on 11 February 2002 in New York, in conjunction with the fortieth session of the Commission for Social Development (11-21 February

2002). The aim was to exchange views on joint cooperation with respect to the tenth anniversary. At the meeting it was agreed to prepare a study, under the chairmanship of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, on the positive contributions of civil society to the well-being of families since 1994. The study will be submitted to the General Assembly in 2004, at its fifth-ninth session.

53. From the foregoing, it is clear that numerous non-governmental organizations are both major actors and important partners of Governments and the United Nations system in this regard. Various non-governmental organizations have undertaken actions and held meetings to define their participation in the anniversary year. The area of research and study remains an essential element in the planning and programming of non-governmental organizations. Also, the information and communication networks of concerned non-governmental organizations have begun to focus on the objectives of the tenth anniversary.

V. Recommendations

54. Notwithstanding the progress made in preparing for the tenth anniversary, as recounted in this report, more concerted actions still need to be taken by numerous countries. It is essential to intensify efforts in all areas and at all levels in the remaining period of the preparatory phase, and to carry out an effective programme of observance. The following recommendations are considered essential measures for a successful observance of the anniversary:

(a) At the national level, it is crucial that preparatory measures be undertaken in countries where this has not yet been done. It is vital that countries set up national coordinating committees or similar mechanisms for the anniversary, or entrust responsibility to existing bodies for preparations and observance. In countries where preparatory measures are already under way, those measures should be intensified;

(b) All countries should set the end of 2003 as a target date for finalizing a programme for the observance of the anniversary;

(c) Specific and targeted steps should be taken to reach and involve the community and grass-roots organizations, as well as families themselves. Local initiatives, in particular, should be given support;

(d) The active participation of non-governmental organizations should be further encouraged and their efforts supported by substantive and technical support. In particular, full use should be made of their experience and grass-roots links to promote local and national participation and action. They should be fully involved as partners in the efforts of Governments and the United Nations system;

(e) Within the framework of preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary, replenishing of the resources of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities is needed to assist Governments in implementing International Year of the Family objectives;

(f) Research and academic institutions have a valuable role to play in the family-policy process at all levels. All actors should encourage their role in improving knowledge and information on families;

(g) In view of the wide range of activities undertaken by the United Nations system in the field of families, the need for coordination and cooperation is evident. Such inter-agency cooperation would generate a greater awareness of family issues among the governing bodies of many United Nations organizations.

Notes

[1] Research topics are the following: approaches to family policy development; technology and its impact on the family; statistics and indicators for family well-being; HIV/AIDS and its impact on families; retirement and its implications for families; family businesses and their importance for economic development; and social functions of families in the areas of socialization and care-giving. The current membership consists of universities in Austria, Canada, France, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, the Philippines, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, the United States of America and Uruguay.

[2] The Department convened a consultative meeting on regional and global coordination in the promotion of social integration, held in New York from 1 to 5 October 2001. It was attended by representatives of the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Also present were representatives of the Department of Public Information and the Regional Commissions New York Office. Points of agreement were adopted with a view to developing a focused approach to the preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, such as (a) holding informal consultations at the regional level with representatives of relevant United Nations bodies and agencies and regional and non-governmental organizations; (b) exchanging information among focal points within each Regional Commission for the tenth anniversary; (c) utilizing the resources of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities to support catalytic activities; and (d) preparing a joint analytical study on major regional trends affecting families.

[3] The National Council on Family Relations provides a forum for family researchers, educators and practitioners to share in the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family relationships.

[4] The Meeting was attended by the New York NGO Committee on the Family, the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, the International Federation for Family Development, the Focus on the Family (Canada) Association, Parents Forum, the Foundation for the Rights of the Family, the Baha'i International Community, and the Family Support Federation of Argentina.